

Contributions.

HINDRANCES: INSIDE AND OUTSIDE.

G. W. RENCH.

The reason why the Brethren Church in many places does not bound forward and sieze the place awaiting her is because of obstacles placed in her way. She has both the privilege and the opportunity. There never has been such a demand for genuine, honest Bible doctrines without the isms as there is now. Ingersoll might lecture for a week in a city but he would not make one-tenth the people so "shaky" as would one good gospel sermon on "What We Believe." We unquestionably have the advantage in *our plea* and with the "hindrances" out of the way ought to occupy the front position wherever we have planted our banner. Shall we not "go up and take the land?" Why not?

As I speak of a few of these hindrances I hope my motive may not be misconstrued. I love our cause because it is right. I hope my words may be helpful.

The first hindrance both in place in this article and in importance, in my opinion, is *unqualified leaders*. This has been the chief obstacle in the past and is the trouble to-day. I speak largely from experience. I have felt the need many many times of information which would help me to cope with intricate and dangerous conditions which had to be met. I believe that a theological course which does not give a large place to church management as well as to sermon building is a failure. I think that three-fourths of the ministers fail not because they can not sermonize but because they can not or *do not* give attention to the details of church work and do not organize their forces.

There are many congregations which can scarcely keep their heads above water because the details of the work have been ignored. No doubt some of these congregations have able preachers; but sometimes you will find the helm in the hands of bad people. We can never get to the front under such circumstances. Good people do not want their church work to look pretty from the outside while the inside is downright hypocrisy. They want it to bear the impress of honesty and sincerity at all times and under all circumstances.

I know of some cases where trouble was brewing. It was evident that it would terminate in a general uproar unless settled. Instead of the leaders going to the parties and telling them that if they wanted to be members of the church they must mind their own business, they allowed the quarrel to go on and soon the uproar came.

The result was that the influence of the church in that community was swept away in a crash.

What do you hear when you get out among other people about us as a church? We are not censured about the bad sermons our people preach; but about our bad management. I have frequently heard it said that Progressive preachers always preach good sermons. I have frequently heard the opposite of their management.

Then, the services ought to be characterized by intense earnestness. Not boisterousness. I sometimes get ashamed of my noise. Every part of the service should be impressive. I would think it just about as appropriate to say "we will have another prayer while the crowd gathers" as to say "we will have a song while the people are coming." God wants service. If we are singing to kill time better leave it out entirely. Every part of the service ought to be dignified; and ministers should study this as well as their sermons.

Another hindrance is for members to insist upon doing some one else's work rather than their own. Leave the management to the officers if they are doing any. If they are not, tell them so instead of trying to manage the church yourself. If you can not build the temple yourself be willing to work where you are put. I have heard of people who would not sing unless they could lead. Oh, how mean and contemptible and little is such a spirit! If you have such a spirit you may rest assured that it has a forked tail and hooks upon its wings. Don't keep company with such beings.

But I see my article is already too lengthy and I have just begun. Dear friends, think of all the hindrances you can and then root them out of the church.

THE SOURCES OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE.— No. 5.

J. A. MILLER.

It certainly can not be amiss, in a careful study of the most profound questions concerning human life and destiny, to take cognizance of a few fundamental facts and basic principles. I therefore, venture to turn aside from the main line of thought to be pursued in these papers to note the sources of human knowledge. Apart from the religious import of what is here said, it is not useless study.

I. THE PROPRIETY OF ASCERTAINING KNOWLEDGE.

Knowledge is defined as the product of knowing. *To know* embraces all the acts of intellect. It is sufficient for our present purpose to assume that we *can* know and therefore that we have knowledge.

We can with propriety seek to discover the *sources* whence all knowledge, and therefore each and every component part of the sum of human knowledge comes.

This opens the way for the investigation of the sources whence our knowledge of Religion, and so in particular our knowledge of the Christian Religion is derived. It is a legitimate inquiry—What is the source of each and every fact of the Christian system of thought and life?

2. THE EXTENT OF OUR APPREHENSION.

The extent to which we shall be able to apprehend the several facts bearing upon our investigation as drawn from the several sources here presented; the measure of credence to be given and the authority to be recognized as belonging to the facts thus determined; and even the weight to be to the *sources* of knowledge themselves as compared with each other—all these remain open questions. Opinions, indeed, may be expressed upon some phase or phases of these questions. On these questions men differ.

3. ENUMERATION OF SOURCES.

1.) *Nature*. By the term *Nature* we are to understand is meant the existing universe of mind and matter; the sum and order of causes and resulting phenomena. Considered as a whole or in detail, Nature embodies the totality of finite agencies and forces. God as the infinite, commanding and creating Intelligence, stands in the same relation to Nature as a simple cause to its related effect. God is independent of Nature in that He is in His Being an absolute Personality. Nature as thus viewed presents more than mere pantheistic phenomena. Perceived by man in the realm of mental and material phenomena, Nature is indeed the *voice* of a Supreme Personal God, (not the accidental manifestation of phenomena of the ever-changing world-substance—God—to an ever multiplying and vanishing host of conscious and intelligent manifestations of itself!) speaking to the intelligent conscious creature of His love in a language read by the weakest of the race. Rom. 1: 20.

2.) *The Soul*. By the term soul we are to understand that part of man's nature characterized by mental and spiritual activities, especially by the attributes of self-consciousness, reason, intuition, the higher emotions, and conscience.

3.) *History*. This is that branch of human knowledge which embraces the past experiences of the race. It is the record of these experiences transmitted to each succeeding generation. It embraces within its scope the sum of individual and family, tribal and national annals. It comprehends the recorded *thought* and *feeling*,